

Remarks

Claim 26 has been amended to require storing the heat treated blank at room temperature for an interval of time. This amendment broadens the scope of claim 26, because the heat treated blank is no longer required to be allowed “to stand” at room temperature. The heat treated blank only needs to be stored at room temperature for an interval of time. The amendment to claim 26 finds support in the last paragraph on page 3 of the specification. New claim 39, includes the features of claim 26 as previously presented.

US 3,337,376 to Grange et al. (hereinafter, “Grange”) does not disclose storing a heat treated blank at room temperature for an interval of time. According to column 2, lines 29 – 33 of Grange, “[a]fter performing one of the [disclosed] methods to produce an austenite-free microstructure, and either cooling to room temperature or reheating immediately, the steel is then reheated rapidly to a temperature in the range of 1425 to 1600°F.” Grange does not disclose storing at room temperature for an interval of time. To the contrary, Grange makes clear that when room temperature is reached, the steel is reheated rapidly.

The Office action does not address the requirements of claim 28. Claim 28 requires the conditions of the second heat treatment to be controlled so as not to increase the layer thickness of the blank. The Office action makes no finding as to whether this feature was known or would have been obvious at the time the invention was made. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claim 31 has been rewritten to clarify that a reinforcing blank is included between the first heating and the second heating. At the time the present invention was made, a person having ordinary skill in the art had no reason to modify the process according to Grange by hard-soldering a reinforcing part according to the steel described in US 2002/0069506 to Brodt et al. (hereinafter, “Brodt”) between the austenitizing step described in column 2, lines 6 – 16 of Grange and the reheating step described in column 2, lines 31 – 39 of Grange.

New claims 34, 35, 36, 38, 40, and 41 find support throughout the specification, for example, on page 3. New claims 37, 42, and 43 find support throughout the

specification, for example, on page 5. Claim 44 finds support throughout the specification, for example, on page 7.

The Director is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees filed, asserted to be filed, or which should have been filed herewith (or with any paper hereafter filed in this application by this firm) to our Deposit Account 14-1437. Please credit any excess fees to such account.

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